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SUBJECT Disclosing U.S. Intelligence Agents

BILL CHRISTIAN: The House today passed legislation providing penalties of up to ten years in prison and fifty thousand dollars in fines for those who publicly disclose the identities of covert US intelligence agents, informants and sources. The bill would be voted on in the Senate, but a court test of the measure may be on the horizon.

Travis T. Hipp has more.

TRAVIS T. HIPPI: Hard time for blowing secret agents. The House of Representatives, resting from its long budget battle, took up cudgels on national security, voting to impose criminal penalties of up to three years in federal prison for any civilian journalists or scholars identifying any member of the US intelligence service publicly, and adding two additional years to the sentence of any government employee doing the same.

The bill was a response to accusations that a rogue CIA agent, Philip Agee, and his anti-spook publication, Covert Action, caused the death of one overseas operative in the Mediterranean area and forced others to withdraw from their diplomatic post covers around the globe.

Washington touts [?] don't give the bill much of a chance in the Senate despite its flag waving factor. Or if the law is passed they say the Supreme Court will certainly find that its provision, singling out journalists and researchers, to be unconstitutional.

Watching the lid being fitted on a can of spy worms. For Pacific News in Kamal, I'm Travis T. Hipp.

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CHRISTIAN: A House Intelligence Committee report gives several examples of situations not covered by the bill, including coverage of any CIA involvement in the Watergate scandal. Other exceptions include efforts of various organizations to discover the names of agents who might have infiltrated those organizations.